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quality not seen in lower snows, makes it an impressive spectacle. The wide floor of the Sariqol Valley is dotted with homely little farmsteads, each nestling snugly beside a clump of willows. The soil is remarkably good; wheat, barley and oats sown in May are reaped in October, and two crops of lucerne are usually taken. Sweet-smelling purple orchises, gentians, vetches of all colours and primulas of large size line the paths in June and July.

The Amban of Sariqol, our first acquaintance in the Chinese official world, was not a favourable example of his kind. He was an opium-smoker, and shortly after our arrival at Kashgar was relieved of his post. I called on him my first morning, as I was determined to be polite in spite of his having practically ignored us the previous day. As I arrived only half an hour after the appointed time, nothing was ready, and the Aqsaqal and I had to stand in the waiting-room of the "Yamen" or magistrate's quarters amid an interested crowd of bottle-washers and hangers-on, while a servant hurriedly brought in a small table, two chairs and some uninviting-looking sweetmeats. Finally the Amban came in and we both sat down. Pale green tea tasting strongly of hot water was our tipple; conversation, I regret to say, somewhat flagged, the old Amban being obviously under the influence of opium while my style was cramped by the "gallery" standing close around and following every syllable, every mouthful. I was relieved to be able to escape after twenty minutes or so of this entertainment.

The Amban was in better form when he returned my call the same afternoon, and did his best to make amends for his previous remissness. This encouraged us to invite him, his young son, the Commandant of the Garrison and his adjutant, and the Pir of the Maulais to tea the following afternoon. I found out afterwards that it was a mistake to ask the Pir, as the Chinese seldom sit at table with their subjects. D. spent the whole morning making scones and sweets, and the party was a great success. Conversation flourished, the Amban being quite talkative. He spoke in Chinese to the Adjutant, who translated into Turki to Nadir Beg, who translated into Persian to me and I into English to D. So:—

AMBAN (to Adjutant): How old is the *Tai-tai* (lady)?
ADJUTANT (to Nadir Beg): How old is the *Khanum*?
NADIR BEG (to me): How old is the *Mem-sahiba*?
I (to D.) How old are you?

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574 D. (to me): Twenty-five.
I (to Nadir Beg): *Bist o panj.*
NADIR BEG (to Adjutant): *Zhigima-besh.*
ADJUTANT (to Amban) Twenty-five (whatever it is in Chinese!)

Next question, by the same route, from the Amban: "How is it that whereas, owing to the intense cold of this barbarous country, we and our subjects wear quantities of clothes right up to the chin, the Tai-tai wears nothing but a skirt and a closely-fitting garment cut low at the neck?" Sensation on arrival of this question! After some deliberation we concoct a suitable reply, to the effect that the country from which the Tai-tai comes, Scotland, is intensely cold, far colder than the Chinese Pamirs, and that this country seems quite hot to her—hence the scantiness of her attire!

After tea D. visited the wives of the O.C. Garrison and the Adjutant. She told me afterwards that both were Tajiks and the Adjutant's wife very pretty. After the visit at their house the ladies came back with D. to her room, and D. had to show them her dresses and keep them amused till a quarter past eight, when they finally departed.

484 563 The last lap of our long trek, from Tashqurghan to Kashgar by the Chichiklik route, was in many ways the most interesting of all. We slept each night in Kirghiz tents which had been collected for us by the Beg of the neighbourhood; this was arranged each day, in the Tashqurghan district, by an excellent Tajik orderly or *yayieh* sent with us by the Magistrate of Tashqurghan. Our transport was similarly arranged, ponies, yaks, camels or donkeys according to what was available. As soon as we entered the Yangi Hissar district an orderly from the Amban of that place met us and performed similar services. A tower of strength to the party was Nadir Beg, already mentioned as having met us at the Mintaka, who looked after us in a most fatherly manner and to whom we took a great liking. A tall, handsome, black-bearded, cheerful, energetic man of about forty, a good horseman and hard as nails, Nadir is a splendid specimen of the Tajik race; he is particularly useful on the march in Sariqol, for he seems to have known every one of the people, Tajiks and Kirghiz alike, from 522 their childhood up. He also has a strong sense of humour. I shall never forget the glee with which he told us what his small son had said to him on seeing Gerard Price wearing an oiled-silk waterproof cover over his sun-helmet. "Daddy,"

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said the little boy, " why does the Sahib wear a lamb's tummy on his head ? " The problem of supplies was not so difficult as we had expected. Milk, cream and butter were always to be had from the Kirghiz, but we only once or twice got eggs and never a chicken. At the shop of the one Hindu *bunnia* at Tashqurghan D. was able to replenish her store of flour, oil, dried fruits, walnuts and matches for the onward journey.

On 9th July we left Tashqurghan in state, our caravan now consisting of 17 ponies and one donkey. The Amban made amends for having ignored our arrival by arranging an elaborate *chah-jan* or farewell tea-drinking, combined with a parade of the entire garrison of Tashqurghan. This took place by the road-side about a mile from the bazaar. In the three-walled mud hut used for these ceremonies D. and I sat on the edge of a platform on each side of a wooden tray containing a china bowl of green tea for each of us, and two or three saucers of currants, almonds and strange Chinese confectionery tasting mostly of dust. On one side of the interior of the " reception-pavilion " sat the Amban and O.C. Tashqurghan, on the other G. and our Aqsaqal, while the Turki-speaking interpreter, standing, did his best with the Aqsaqal to keep the very sticky conversational ball rolling between us and the Chinese. The parade consisted of about thirty men and four enormous red banners ; the drill was most successful, until an unexpected evolution had to be performed in connexion with the photograph I took of the army, which caused the O.C. to march and counter-march his troops over half the area under his command before he finally got them to face the camera. Farewells and much hand-shaking completed the proceedings. It may be mentioned here that when a Chinaman shakes hands, he shakes his own hand, the other person doing the same opposite him, both parties bowing deeply the while.

Escaped at last from ceremonial, we revelled once more in an exhilarating canter over the grassy pamir ; past Tiznaf and Chashman, groups of tiny farmsteads, each with its willow-clump, standing amid wide fields of corn and rich pasture ; past bend after bend of the river, running clear as crystal through the meadows with many a fine pool, a possible trout-stream wickedly wasted in unstocked emptiness.

Leaving the Sariqol valley ten miles north of Tashqurghan we mounted steadily for five hours and camped at 12,300 feet in the narrow Darshart ravine. Next day we crossed the

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Art (13,340 feet) and the Kashka Su (12,900 feet) respectively. They were very much alike; winding ravines among high rocky hills; a glen thickly carpeted with alpine flowers, narrowing and steepening as we ascended it; a last back-breaking ascent, and then the col, a rounded ridge with out-cropping rocks and turf enamelled with tiny blooms. We lingered long on the Kashka Su; we had been travelling over or among mountains for such an age—a golden age—that it was difficult to believe that we were crossing our very last pass. From the summit we looked with interest towards the north, hoping to see the plains of Kashgaria spread out below us, but as far as the eye could reach lay a jumble of green ridges surmounted here and there by a snow-flecked crag and deeply seamed by silver torrents, the music of which floated gently up to us. Behind us to the south and south-east a magnificent array of giant peaks, the little-known mountains of the Upper Yarkand River valley, bounded the horizon with walls of cliff and glacier.

Descending steeply for 1,500 feet over meadows covered with asphodel we found a small tent pitched for us and a way-side tea-drinking prepared by a delightful old Father Christmas of a Beg called Mirza Ahmad Beg of Taumtara, a side-glen to the north-west. We greeted our host in the tent and were at once confronted with a mountainous collation of freshly-killed and exceedingly tough mutton, leather-like bread, a kind of oily and very indigestible pastry and tea with salt in it. Being fortunately left to ourselves with this repast, we were able, ostensibly at any rate, to do our duty as guests by disposing of quite a large quantity of the food; this we effected by the simple process of eating our own sandwiches and putting the Beg's viands in the haversack thus emptied. Meanwhile the Beg's wife and sister, who must have heard of D.'s fame from Yambulak, were round the corner in gorgeous robes and exaggerated Kirghiz head-dresses, awaiting their opportunity. As we emerged from the tent after our deceitful meal, we saw them in all their glory crossing the stream on their ponies, a picturesque sight. A lengthy interview with D. in the tent followed, while I talked to the old Beg outside. When the ladies had at last finished sampling D.'s medicinal stock and wisdom (for that is what they had really come after), we continued on our way. D. said that they had been rather heavy on hand and had no small-talk; they gave her the impression of being *mazlum-kishis* indeed (I may explain that

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been record time. Gerard's pony also tried to break the flat-racing record for Kashgaria on this stretch, with the result that four miles out of Suget we came up with G. standing ruefully by his steed and holding half of one of its hoofs in his hand ; it had put its foot into a hole, split its hoof, crossed its legs and turned head over heels all at once, it appeared. Fortunately the ground was soft. In a leafy suburb of Yangi Hissar we were welcomed with mounds of toffee, melons of vast size and many loyal speeches by the Indian Shylocks of the town. Further on the District Magistrate and the Commandant of the Garrison met us and we went through the formality of the official tea-drinking. The Amban was a complete contrast to him of Tashqurghan ; he was a stout, clean-shaven, intelligent type of person, rather like a mediæval monk. He had once, he told us, been a student at the Peking law-schools and had served as a judge somewhere on the coast. The Celestial effect of his black satin coat and his cream-coloured silk skirt covering close-fitting white calico trousers was somewhat spoilt by a bowler hat which had seen better days.

Escorted by the local soldiery we moved slowly in procession into Yangi Hissar. It was a relief to enter the cool, dustless streets of the bazaars, which here are not domed as in Persia but roofed after a fashion with sacking and wattles. The shops struck us as neater and cleaner than those of India or Persia, the counters of the many food-shops, fruiterers, butchers, etc., being well scrubbed. The Chinese shops are particularly neat and tidy, and reminded one of village " general shops " at home.

Hardly had we arrived at the garden of the empty Swedish Mission bungalow when the Amban and Commandant, most courteously according to Chinese ideas, came to call. Fortunately the Aqsaqal had prepared tea and a noble spread of fruit and sweets. During this function we were treated to a little bit of Chinese servants' manners which very nearly upset our equilibrium for good and all. When he sat down, the Amban took off his bowler and handed it to his servant, who stood behind his chair. The servant, who already wore a decrepit Homburg, took the Amban's hat and coolly, as if it were the most natural thing to do with it, clapped it on top of his own ! During the rest of the meal we all had to keep our eyes firmly averted from the two-hatted servant, for anything more ludicrous than the sight of his solemn, old-family-butler face surmounted by the Amban's seedy

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bowler and his own archaic Homburg, one on top of the other, cannot be imagined.

We thought we were going to have the comfortable Mission house to sleep in, but it appeared that owing to a mistake the keys had not been obtained from the missionaries at Kashgar, who are kind enough always to put the house at the disposal of the Consulate if required. Nothing else having been arranged we had eventually to doss down in a small farm-house on the outskirts of the town. It was not very comfortable, but we made the best of it and by half-past six I was able to change my clothes and drive round to call on the Amban, the Commandant and an ex-Amban who was still living in the town. In almost every district we visited in our subsequent wanderings we found one, sometimes two, ex-Ambans. Apparently it takes months, even years, to hand over charge, owing presumably to the mess in which each Magistrate gets his work, particularly the financial side of it. So much so, I believe, that it is the custom in China for his friends to congratulate an official formally on the successful handing over of his charge. Next day before proceeding on our journey, we attended an official lunch at the Yamen, where we were received with much pomp and ceremony including a salute of three "guns," or rather bangs from small mortars stuck upright in the ground. The decorations of the room in which we lunched, though faded, were in excellent taste; red chairs covered with black silk; a few panels of decorative Chinese writing; windows of a kind of fretwork in chaste geometrical designs, with ancient lace instead of glass, and little else in the room beyond the table. A Chinese feast is so long and complicated an affair that it merits more detailed description than I can afford it here, and I must therefore refer the reader to a later chapter.[1] Suffice it to say that we were as much impressed by the courtesy and considerateness of our host as by the fearful tinned and dried delicacies from China Proper such as shark's fin, sea-slugs, fish-entrails, seaweed and bamboo-root on which he appeared to pride himself most. All these *plats* seemed to us to consist of substances either glutinous or messy, or both, and to taste of nothing in particular.

Wayside tea-drinkings similar to those of the day before, but in the reverse order, heralded our departure from Yangi Hissar in a landau kindly sent out for us from Kashgar by the Taoyin. Twenty miles of perfectly flat country, alternating

[1] See Ch. VI, pp. 82–84.

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pits were filled up with a layer three feet thick of branches, matting, straw and leaves, a small hole closed with straw only being left for the gardener to get in and out by.

With regard to fruit, nearly everything that is found in a south of England garden grew well in our garden ; most of the fruit indeed ripened too quickly so that there was a good deal of waste. We used to get two crops of green figs, but the trees had to be well covered up in winter to protect them from the frost. Grapes also grew wonderfully, the base of the vine-stem being similarly covered up in winter. Strawberries (known locally as " Russian mulberries ") grew in profusion, but never became very sweet or large because they ripened too quickly. Apples and pears were poor, for lack of good European varieties, but peaches, nectarines, black mulberries, greengages and damsons were all as good as could be ; the greengages, indeed, were almost too sweet. And yet our orchard was not a good one, compared for instance with those of the chief Andijani merchants. Besides all the above, they grew magnificent cherries, quinces and pomegranates, none of which were good in our garden. Among flowers, most annuals did very well, and roses too if the bushes were carefully buried in winter. D. started a most successful rose-garden with several varieties imported from India.

I have already mentioned the frequency with which we were entertained by the hospitable Chinese officials. This was particularly the case when Chu Tao Tai, as he was generally called, was Taoyin or Prefect of Kashgaria. From the social point of view, apart from everything else, it was a great blow to us when after a long term of office at Kashgar this universally-respected official was transferred to Yarkand in the autumn of 1922. Beaming all over with humour and good-will, he was one of the best hosts I have ever seen, and we always looked forward to his parties. He got over the language difficulty at the more polyglot meals by the simple method of seating all the guests of one nationality together, so that there was always a subdued hum of conversation, if no more ; besides which he himself was always an interesting and interested talker and kept the available interpreters fully occupied. What appealed to us most, however, was his consideration for his foreign guests' likes and dislikes. He had evidently made a special study of European tastes and manners, and as far as possible he tempered the wind of Chinese hospitality to the shorn Western lamb.

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574 Our first dinner-party at the Taoyin's Yamen was a memorable affair. To begin with, our kind host insisted on sending round for us his landau and pair of spirited Russian bays. In we climbed at the Consulate gate, off went two of our uniformed orderlies and four Chinese troopers in front and next moment we were galloping through our outer gate and down the narrow, uneven lane leading to the Yarbagh Gate at a most alarming rate, hotly pursued by our other orderlies on their horses and more yelling Chinese cavalrymen. Arrived at the city gate I thought we would slacken speed through the crowded streets, but not a bit of it; on we tore, grazing fruit-stalls and missing street-corners by inches, the outriders clearing a lane for us with shouts and yells, until we came to an unimposing mud gateway above which towered a tall mast with a curious kind of crow's nest half-way up it. Above hung the five-coloured flag of the Chinese Republic—yellow for the Chinese themselves, red for the Mongols, black for the Manchus, white for the Mussulmans and blue for the Tibetans. As we alighted and entered the Yamen precincts a primitive fife-and-drum band struck up from a gallery on our left, and we were further startled a moment later by loud shouts of *Pao!* (salute) from our escort, followed by three deafening bangs. A moment later we found ourselves walking past a row of Chinese soldiers in baggy blue uniforms presenting arms with antiquated-looking rifles, and a black-clad Chinese major-domo was bowing before us with our own huge red visiting-cards—sent on ahead for the purpose—clasped in both hands. White-bearded Turki Begs in long cloaks conducted us through an inner gate into a beautiful garden full of every kind of flower and fruit and containing three large ponds covered with pink-blossomed lotus. In the middle was a raised platform with a pagoda roof over it and white-clothed tables spread with fruit and sweets; beyond it, a long single-storied pavilion of painted wood, one end of which with its verandah overhung one of the lotus-ponds like the broad stern of a houseboat. Our genial host and his "Foreign Secretary" met us near the gate with many polite Chinese speeches and hand-shakes both Chinese and English, and led us to the summer-house where we found gathered most of the other guests, including the leading Chinese officials and representatives of the Swedish and Russian communities. It was now three o'clock and we had not lunched, so that we were glad to keep up our strength with tea and fruit at intervals throughout the hour and a half which

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followed, during which we all sat talking in the pavilion or walked about the garden admiring the lotuses. Dinner when it came at last was served in the houseboat-like pavilion, the interior of which consisted of one long, airy dining-room tastefully decorated with flowers in pots and Chinese paintings.

The Taoyin, as I have said, was always merciful to his European friends, and the dinner was much shorter than the average Chinese repast. There were only some twenty-five courses, and these were eaten with the full complement of knives, forks and spoons; not a chop-stick to be seen, though I, for one, as soon as I had learnt the knack of using them, always used chop-sticks on the exotic Chinese food rather than banal Western cutlery. It may be of interest to record the menu, so far as I was able to identify the courses. Hors d'œuvres including, in addition to the usual items, slices of hard-boiled egg which had been buried for some years and had turned quite green, were eaten during as well as before the meal.

MENU

Tea and Dessert
Hors d'œuvres
Syrup dumplings
Shark's fin with shredded chicken
Pigeon's eggs
Pork fritters
Traveller-fish soup
Bamboo-root stewed in syrup
Roast chicken
Mince dumplings
Dried Chuguchak sturgeon
Sea-slug soup
Tinned oranges
Stewed chestnuts
Cold roast pork
Veal fritters
Fish tripe
Cabbage soup
Stewed pears stuffed with rice
Pastry-dumplings
Baked mutton
Roast pigeon
Mutton fat fritters
Seaweed soup
Lotus seeds in syrup
Boiled rice
Tea and dessert

The Taoyin's chef was a master, and many of the above dishes were excellent, both European and Chinese; but I

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must confess that the three or four favourite Chinese *plats* leave me cold. Shark's fin consists of a tangle of absolutely tasteless pieces of white elastic, stewed with shreds of chicken; sea-slugs are dark grey gelatinous substances with an unpleasant dead sort of flavour, swimming in a salty gravy; bamboo-root in slices has a nutty flavour and is not so bad, but very indigestible; another delicacy which is, I believe, a kind of seaweed tastes of—well, of seaweed. I can quite believe that all these things have a quite different flavour when fresh, especially the marine products which seem to appeal particularly to the Chinese; the trouble is that in Sinkiang, five months' journey from the coast, they can only be obtained in the dried form, and yet the Chinese like or pretend to like them better than the best-cooked fresh local products. The fact is, I suppose, that the exiled Chinaman has the palate of faith and to him even a dried sea-slug tastes of home.

What was almost always a trial at Yamen banquets was the drink. Except on great occasions when one or two bottles of a sticky brand of French champagne were produced and administered in small quantities, there was nothing to drink but a peculiarly evil-smelling kind of brandy. One was seldom pressed to eat, for which one was thankful enough, but it was impossible to avoid at least sipping the brandy between every course. A Chinese host talks much more about his cellar than about his cook; to refuse to drink with him means that you do not like his wine, an imputation which causes him much loss of face. Apart from the conventional politenesses, which one soon learns to give and take as a matter of course, there is nothing stilted or ceremonious about Chinese conviviality, even on official occasions. The etiquette seems to be for a guest to behave as if he were in his own home, lolling about on his chair, getting up from table in the middle of dinner and walking about for a few minutes, and so on. When conversation flagged at our own parties it was generally safe to start the Chinese off on a kind of " fingers-out " game which was very popular. In this, two players put out their right hands at the same time, either closed or with one or more fingers outstretched, at the same time shouting a number which they guess will be the total number of fingers out for both hands. Whenever one of the players shouts the correct number, he makes the other drink his health. The fingers go out and the numbers are shouted with amazing rapidity, and when three or four such contests are going on at the same time

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the effect on the gaiety, or at any rate noisiness, of the party and on the circulation of the liquor is remarkable.

The manners and customs of the table-servants were a never-failing source of delight to D. and myself. I have mentioned in a former chapter the staid Chinese butler at Yangi Hissar who clapped his master's bowler on top of his own Homburg and stood solemnly wearing the two hats throughout the tea-party. Often at dinner-parties in the open, when we had left the table and were sitting over tea and dessert in another part of the garden, I noticed the waiters going round the table and pouring back into the bottle any champagne or brandy left by the diners in their glasses. After one of our own dinners on the terrace, I happened to go back suddenly to the table to fetch something and found two attendants who had come with Chinese guests similarly occupied—but it was not into my bottles that they were pouring the remains of the drinks. At a certain ladies' dinner-party at Khotan D. was electrified to observe one of the waiters take away a guests' cup, drink off the cold remains of the tea and, without washing it, fill it up from the tea-pot and hand it back to its owner. After that, she said, she took care to drain her cup to the dregs every time!

Harding and I (D. fortunately was not invited) attended during our first week in Kashgar another meal which was very different from the civilized banquet described above. This was a lunch given by General Ma, Titai (G.O.C.) of Kashgaria, one of the worst scoundrels in Central Asia. This person was a Muhammadan of Yunnan province, aged over seventy yet full of vitality, who had held the chief military command south of the Tien Shan for seven or eight years and had taken advantage of his position to enrich and aggrandize himself by the most brutal and oppressive methods. He made everybody call him *Padshah* (king) on pain of death; he had a whole harem full of the prettiest Turki women in Kashgar, and his armed agents roamed the country-side "looking for new cows to milk," as the Titai facetiously put it. The only person in Kashgaria of whom he was afraid was Chu Tao Tai, and after the latter's transfer his extortions quadrupled. He had a pleasant way of trumping up charges against people whom he did not like, or who refused to pay him the blackmail he demanded, and cutting off their fingers or toes, joint by joint, in an immense hay-chopper he had constructed specially for the purpose. In fact, he emulated the exploits of the worst robber-Tuchuns of China Proper, the only difference being

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661 that his army was mostly on paper and he had no real strength behind him.

574 Ma Titai's headquarters were at the New or Chinese city, six miles east of Old Kashgar, and here he kept up great state. Harding and I looked forward with much interest to seeing this ogre; nor were we disappointed, for there was something distinctly ogre-ish about our experiences. Half an hour's ride from the Consulate brought us within sight of the long massive walls of the Titai's citadel. Here we were met by a troop of well-mounted but untidy and apparently only quarter-disciplined Chinese cavalry, who escorted us in a thick cloud of dust through dirty, tumbledown bazaars thronged by a sinister-looking half-breed populace to a huge mud-brick gateway of the *lasciate ogni speranza* type. Here the smell which rose from the dry moat below nearly knocked us off our horses. Within, more gateways, skew-eyed like the first to keep out the devils (in China the devils can only fly straight, so a gateway with a kink in it defeats them) followed by a long street of shops rather more prosperous-looking than those outside. Here and there we had peeps up side-lanes of fantastically-shaped temples and other buildings, some half-ruined, others grotesquely painted and surmounted by symbolical wooden figures of birds and beasts.

344 At last we came to the Titai's *yamen* or palace and found ourselves in a vast square with a pagoda-roofed gateway in front of us and enormous figures of dragons on either side. Troops of soldiers dashed about presenting arms as they ran and fell hurriedly into line with much shouting of words of command, while the salute-guns banged their welcome and horses shied in all directions. Passing through huge painted doors we were welcomed in an inner courtyard by a short, grizzled, monkey-like old man with a long wispy moustache and fierce eyes, resplendently arrayed in a saxe-blue Chinese Field Marshal's uniform several sizes too large for him, complete with plumed hat, several rows of stars and medals and gold lace epaulettes the size of hassocks flapping from his shoulders. With the gold-encrusted tunic hanging about his wispy old frame like a frock-coat on a scarecrow, and the overalls, as usual in the Sinkiang Army, innocent of braces, he looked a regular Chinese Count Hedzoff of Paphlagonia; but there was a sinister feel behind the *opera-bouffe*—or was it only because we knew about the murders and torturings which went on somewhere behind the grim walls of his citadel?

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Behind him we were relieved to see Chu Tao Tai and other official friends from the Old City; the Tao Tai whispered to us that he had made a point of being present as he was the only person who could keep the Titai in some sort of order.

The meal when it came was a remarkable experience. We sat down to a table which had evidently been arranged for the old man by Chu Tao Tai, for the seating and appointments were very much the same as at the latter's Yamen; but there the resemblance ended. The first thing our host did was to take off his uniform in front of us all and sit down in a suit of pale blue silk pyjamas, remarking as he did so that it was very hot and he could stand the uniform no longer. He then seized his chop-sticks and began piling our plates with messes from a mountain of mixed garbage in the middle of the table. Then he shouted to the crowd of minions behind his chair to bring his wine, with which he proceeded to fill our glasses, telling me through Fitzmaurice that it was the best wine in China and contained seventy-one different ingredients, including pounded cuttle-fish bones and essence of tiger's claw. From the smell I could quite believe it, while as for the taste, it nearly took the roof off my mouth; it was not wine at all but exceedingly potent brandy. I heard afterwards that the Titai's brew with its seventy-one dopes was famous throughout Central Asia; it was believed that he owed his extraordinary health and strength (in spite of his age, he was drunk every day of his life) to the magic properties of some of the ingredients. Shark's fin and the other usual delicacies followed, and then came the *pièce de résistance*; the middle of the table was cleared and a huge dish with a sheep roasted whole on it was brought in. Scarcely had it touched the table before the Titai fell on it with a large knife and began hacking at it, tearing off with his left hand chunks of meat and of skin with fat adhering to it and giving them to us. This I gathered was a great honour, and I did my best to eat some of the freshly-killed and therefore very tough meat, but without much success. However, as the Titai very soon became too drunk to notice much, my unworthy appetite escaped comment. The occasional remarks fired at me by our host and translated by Harding or Fitzmaurice were generally to the effect that he, the Titai, had the greatest respect for the King of England, about whose name he seemed to be rather hazy, and that he had been a personal friend of my predecessor and proposed to be mine too; also that he was

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•574 on the best of terms with the President of the Chinese Republic, with whom he corresponded regularly, and who had recently asked him, as a favour, to take over the governorship of the Province. It was not easy to concoct suitable replies to these statements, and we were all thankful when, the barbaric meal over, Chu Tao Tai nodded to me and we were able to take our leave.

A week later I gave a return feast—a bachelor affair, for obvious reasons—for the Titai at the Consulate. It went off well enough in spite of our fears lest the old man should do something quite impossible; in fact, it was as good as a play. The Tao Tai arrived first, and what with the three-gun salute he received and the grand carriage and pair in which he dashed up to the door and the crowd of bottle-washers which accompanied him, there was noise and bustle enough at his arrival; but it was a quiet and peaceful affair compared with that of the Titai. Not only did the latter receive six guns, not only did he bring with him about a hundred soldiers and orderlies and hangers-on of all kinds, all armed to the teeth, not only did he arrive in an enormous troika at full gallop through the narrow streets, but he was preceded by an entire brass band, which dashed into the Consulate inner courtyard at the double, fell into line with lightning rapidity and struck up an ear-splitting Chinese version of "See the Conquering Hero comes!"

The old man was again wearing his Field Marshal's uniform and the first thing he said to me was, "I want you to take my photograph, to send to the President of the Republic!" Accordingly I had to take him out on to the terrace and pose him against the sundial while I took three portraits, being careful to arrange the lighting so that his face should not be under-exposed and so come out dark in the picture. No sooner had we finished the photographing than he borrowed a measuring-tape from me and set two of his men to work measuring the outer walls of the Consulate. It appeared that his enormous country-house about 16 miles from Kashgar had been burnt down the year before, and he wanted to rebuild it on the lines of the British Consulate General! Throughout lunch his men continued to measure the walls of the dining-room, hall and other rooms.

Before the meal I took the Titai to a private room to change his clothes—I did not want a recurrence of what had happened at his own party. During the meal, following his usual

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custom, the old General was served by his own men with his own arrack and would touch none of my drinks. I would not have minded if it had not been that he kept filling my glass and expecting me to drink his health in the horrible stuff: I had suffered it at his house, but did not see why I should not drink what I liked in my own. He himself had been at it ever since about 8 a.m., Chu Tao Tai whispered to me behind his hand, and I could see for myself that he was about half-seas-over; we were all relieved as well as surprised when suddenly, just before the ices, he nodded to his confidential servant and a second later whistles blew outside, everybody started running, the band struck up, the Titai got up unsteadily from the table, made hurried apologies and departed! He was gone before any of us knew where we were.

The leading households among the Swedish missionaries and the Russian colony, each after the manner of their respective nations, were kindness and hospitality personified, and often did we sally forth in the gathering dusk to take part in polyglot but pleasant gatherings round boards groaning with the products of Scandinavian or Muscovite cuisine. At first we drove to these parties in the tarantass, but after an adventure we had in that ancient vehicle our first winter, after a dinner at the Swedish Mission, we took to riding. D. generally rode her camel Sulaiman and I one of the horses, well wrapped up in furs and sheepskins and our feet encased in high "Gilgit boots" of leather thickly padded with felt. The adventure to which I refer is described in the words of a letter I wrote home shortly afterwards.

7th February, 1923.

"D. and I had a somewhat alarming experience the other night. Of the two Yarkandi horses we bought for the tarantass before our autumn tour we sold the smaller one soon after our return, but kept the other, a chestnut, as it is an exceptionally strong and willing beast. We didn't realize quite how willing it could be until last Friday when we started back from the Swedish Mission after dinner. The horse was always inclined to fidget at the start, but on tour he had long marches to do and gave little trouble. A month of good feeding and very little work, however, makes a lot of difference and on this occasion the nipping and eager air of a February night was too much for him. For some reason best known to themselves Turki drivers, including our coachman Abdulla Akhun, always start their horses from the ground and jump on to the box when the carriage is moving. We had hardly climbed into the tarantass and were waving farewells to our hosts, when we felt the ramshackle old conveyance bound forward under us; Abdulla at the horse's head hung on like a bull-

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a cosier and more private apartment; she has but one lattice window, but that looks down on to the roof of a carpenter's house, on which the women sit spinning and sewing in the sun all day long; cocks and hens peck about amid heaps of shavings, and children clad in long boots, greatcoat and nothing else peep over the edge into the street, tumble down the ladder into the shop and otherwise enjoy themselves without anyone minding. Children are cheap in this fat, easy-going land.

Khotan, 27th November, 1922.

We have just returned (8 p.m.) from an interesting but arctic dinner-party at the Yamen. Our hosts, the Amban and Commandant, had arranged a theatrical performance for the occasion, a great honour. D. and I were met within the Yamen by two parallel processions headed by our hosts and their wives respectively; I was led with much ceremony to one dinner-table and D. to another separated from the men by a low partition. The travelling company's stage was set in the open courtyard opposite us.

The prevailing note of the decorations was red; the walls of the Yamen building behind were covered with fine scarlet embroidery and scrolls of the same colour inscribed with Chinese characters in gold; under-foot were red Khotan carpets, while from the roof of the portico and the branches of the trees in the courtyard hung scores of red Chinese lanterns. Most of the latter were of paper, but several of them were of the beautiful and fantastic hexagonal pattern with panels of embroidered silk and long coloured tassels. Major Ma told me that most of the embroidery had been done by Turki women in Khotan, but he hastened to add that the Khotanis had learnt embroidery from the Chinese.

The dinner lasted some four hours, and the theatrical performance went on all the time.[1] After sunset the temperature sank to several degrees below freezing-point, and I nearly froze to death. The Chinese never mind how cold it is, for their winter clothes and boots, lined with fur throughout, are as admirably designed to withstand cold as their summer costume is to keep its wearers cool. D. says she was better off, thanks to large braziers which were kept under the table well stoked with wood-embers. She was charmed with the little Chinese ladies, who wore the regulation black satin tunic and trousers and their hair scraped back and twisted into small buns lavishly decorated with ornaments of jade and precious stones. By far the loveliest of her hostesses, however, was a Turki girl from the Titai's household at Kashgar, who was married to one of the military officers. She had, according to D.—I missed this vision—a perfect profile and small oval face, a complexion like a wild rose and large limpid dark eyes; her voice, like those of the beauties of Kashgar, had a kind of uneven tone with long, full, liquid notes.

The ex-Amban's mother, with whom D. exchanged calls yesterday, was not at the dinner. She, according to D., might have stepped straight out of a fairy-story. She looks about a hundred and fifty, wears a black silk handkerchief tied round her head like a pirate, and owns an enormous woolly black cat which adores her and sits all the time licking her hands and face.

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[1] For a description of a Chinese theatrical performance, see pp. 245–7.

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We did not halt at Saman, as there was one obstacle still to be negotiated before our entrance to the Promised Land was assured. This was a corner of rock which juts out into the stream at the rapids below Khan Terek. At this point the track passes round the rock and is under water even in winter, and I knew that the only chance of getting round it at this season would be at low water in the evening. We came to the place at half-past four, when I found to my relief that there were only about three feet of water off the end of the rock and that the current was not strong, though few feet farther out the cataract roared past like a gigantic mill-race. The loads splashed through without mishap, and half an hour later in the little orchard of Qurghan we were being warmly welcomed by a dozen beaming Kirghiz men and girls.

The only permanent inhabitant of Khan Terek was a little old woman who lived alone in a tiny shanty. Each of the previous occasions on which we had passed her hut she had bustled out with a large copper jug and a wooden bowl to give us tea. She saw us coming this time and hobbled over to our camp where, for once, she had tea with us. Afterwards D. returned her call; she found the old lady living in a room about five feet square off a yard about twice that area, in which she kept one aged cock. Her husband had long been dead, she told D., and her children scattered, but one son occasionally came and cultivated a couple of fields near by, while she stayed in the hut all the year round and made tea for passing Kirghiz.

The humble hospitality of even the poorest of the Kirghiz in these parts warmed our hearts to them. Next day three miles up the Chopkana valley we were overtaken by heavy rain and took refuge in an *aq-oi*. A pretty girl and her one-eyed old father insisted on making up a blazing fire for us and a bowl of tea, chatting politely to us the while. On an exposed meadow at the very top of the pass, 11,500 feet above the sea, we found a solitary *aq-oi* with a girl in it whose husband was away on the hill-side tending the flocks. She had weather-beaten red cheeks and a flat nose, but she was charming and joined us in the tea-basket tea with which we warmed ourselves while waiting for the caravan to struggle up the last steep ascent. Meanwhile, in a large pot on the central fire of fir-logs, she brewed *mach*, a kind of soup of milk, barley-meal and water with a little meat in it, and when our men arrived at the top she ran out and administered it to them

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574 in wooden bowls. Just before we began the descent another lady in an immense and complicated turban arrived panting after us from an encampment far down among the fir-woods on the north side; she brought with her seven hard-boiled eggs and a paving-stone of bread which she insisted on presenting to us. We found afterwards that she was the only person in either the Kaying or the Chopkana valley who kept one or two hens. The Kirghiz are not poultry-keepers, as we knew, and on this visit to Kaying we took a coop of hens up with us for the table. One of these distinguished itself by laying an egg every morning in or near the bathroom of D.'s tent, so it was spared from the pot and presented on our departure to the lady of the hard-boiled eggs.

580 Arrived at Kaying Bashi, we pitched our tents in a spot which we had marked down the previous October as an ideal site for a summer camp, at the edge of the fir-forest two miles above the *aq-ois* in which we had then stayed. Here was a meadow of rich grass by the side of the glacier-stream, 10,400 feet above the sea, sheltered from below by a ridge covered with juniper and barberry and from above by a long tongue of tall firs stretching down from the main forest, with one grand tree, tallest of them all, standing out proudly at its tip. We were all merry as sand-boys when we had settled into camp that evening; D. and I because a dream had come true and we had gained our Happy Valley in spite of all obstacles; the servants because an enormous *aq-oi* was produced by the Kirghiz from the encampment a mile further up the valley, so that they had a palatial kitchen and servants' hall in which to gossip round the fire, in addition to the tents we had brought for them; Zakir Haji the carrier because of the luxuriant grass which carpeted the whole valley-bottom, on which his ponies were to graze free of charge for an indefinite period.

In this secluded Paradise of forest and river, of towering crag and pale-green hanging glacier, of woodland glade and lush meadow, of natural rock-gardens filled with a hundred different kinds of alpine flower, we spent a never-to-be-forgotten three weeks' holiday. It was extraordinary to think that a little Switzerland like this should have existed unsuspected among the very mountains through which, by several different routes, sportsmen and officials and explorers had travelled to and from Kashgar since the seventies. At first the weather was unsettled and rain fell most afternoons and sometimes all night. But we were snug enough in our

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585 spray of beaten-gold flowers quivering on gold wire stalks, bunches
301 of similar ornaments above each ear and huge gold filigree earrings.
302 Their hair was in plaits, with a long black silk tassel attached to each
299 plait. The dresses were of red, blue, emerald, plum, purple, pink and many other bright tints, and the sunlight streaming through the one window lit up a most wonderful picture.

585 "Two chairs had been placed side by side at one end of the room, one for me and one for the bride when she should come. One of
574 the guests who came soon after me was another little bride, some relation of the family but not the girl for whose wedding the party was given. I was told that it was only her second appearance in
576 public since her wedding, and it was perhaps for this reason that her reception was particularly pretty. All the ladies stood up, and as she was led from one to the other each gave her a kiss and shook hands Turki fashion, i.e. taking her clasped hands in theirs and then touching their own lips with a graceful gesture. She was only fifteen, I think, and terribly shy to begin with. She was led up to me and placed in the chair next mine for a few minutes, but she soon slid on to the floor and sat beside her younger sister, a talkative child of eleven who had been told off to fan me. A few belated guests were ushered in, and having shaken hands all round, were assisted to take off their outdoor caps and veils and immediately presented by our hostess with brand-new indoor caps, which unlike the outdoor ones have no fur or lining. Some of the women had brought their own and politely refused the offer of a new one; but it must add considerably to the expense of giving a party when you have to provide indoor caps to guests who have forgotten theirs! Tea was served, soon after I arrived in small china cups with sugar and no milk. Our hostess and her relations had none themselves, but spent their time handing round cups, filling them up with tea and spooning in sugar. There was one lady whom I could not take my eyes off, she was such a wonderful figure in her crimson satin dress with eight long plaits of hair hanging down from under her richly-embroidered cap, and fastened on to four of these long black silk tassels which swept the ground as she moved about. After the cups had been cleared away the musicians struck up and some of the ladies rose and danced in the usual way, one at a time; but soon the long narrow *dastarkhwans* or cloths spread on the ground for eating were put out once more and huge trays of peaches and nectarines were brought in. These disappeared in a marvellously short time and were followed by some more music and dancing, and at about half-past twelve the wedding feast began in earnest. The first course was a very popular one called the Wedding Dish, a sort of soufflé made of stiffly-beaten white of egg and powdered sugar, which is always eaten at weddings. It was served in small bowls with pieces of bread. The arrival of this dish was a signal for a temporary relaxation of the intense decorum which had hitherto characterized the proceedings. The children who had come with their mammas, and who had up to now been playing in the court-yard, crowded into the room or leant in through the wide windows, clamouring for some of the Wedding Dish. The heat became terrific. The hostess had disappeared, presumably to superintend the preparation of the special dishes which were to be served later on. The lady of the eight pigtails and other friends of the family, having

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changed their beautiful but hot satin dresses for simpler affairs of thin silk and muslin, hurried about refilling the bowls, breaking up the bread into suitable-sized pieces and looking after everybody, while two maids did their best to keep us all cool by flapping a large table-cloth in the middle of the room. When the last of the Wedding Dish had been finished, the *dastarkhwans* were taken out to be shaken and we all had our hands washed Mussulman fashion; copper jugs and basins were brought in, and as each of us in turn held out our sticky hands the ladies of the house poured water over them into the basins. Huge piles of round flat loaves of bread about eighteen inches across then appeared and were placed at intervals opposite the guests. Next came large flat dishes of a savoury stew of mutton and vegetables, which was rapidly spooned up by the ladies with corners of bread. Titbits and succulent little bones with meat on them were handed through the window by fond mammas to their clamouring children. When this course was finished there were still a good many of the flat loaves remaining and these were distributed among the guests. One was rather tentatively offered to me; I accepted it joyfully, which was considered a great joke. Fruit, sweets and tea followed, and when everything had been cleared away and another hand-washing had taken place, the musicians struck up again.

" The women danced and I found myself in conversation with a plump elderly dame, the mother of a leading ice-merchant, who was giving Aisha Khan and myself a graphic description of the illness and last moments of her first husband; I did not notice therefore that most of the older ladies had left the room, and it was only when Aisha Khan whispered ' They've gone to fetch the bride,' that I awoke to the fact that satin dresses and velvet jackets had been resumed and every one was looking expectantly towards the door. A few minutes later, surrounded by elderly relatives and friends, the bride appeared. I gasped, for there in the afternoon sunlight which streamed through the windows stood a tall slim figure clad in glittering gold from head to foot. A long coat of gold brocade hid her satin dress, a veil of golden gauze fell round her face and down her back, great sprays of gold flower ornaments quivered in her cap and long earrings of gold and pearls and a heavy chain and pendant of the same metal completed her adornment. She might have been a bride for Tamerlane or some such great Emperor of the olden days! A thin white silk veil was thrown over her face and head, and she was led up to the chair beside mine with great ceremony and made to sit down. Poor thing, she was so nervous that her breath came in gasps and her hands when I touched them were icy cold. All the guests drew back, then a little girl of about four was pushed forward and running up to the bride snatched away the white veil. This was the signal for a regular outburst, all the guests screaming and laughing and chattering at the same time, and then falling on the bride and kissing her. When this, evidently the most important part of the ceremony, was over I thought it was about time to go, as it was nearly four o'clock.

" What strikes me most about these women is their manners, which are as pretty as their clothes. When the hostess gives tea or anything else to one of her guests, the latter rises and bows saying ' *Ashkalla* ' (thank you). On arrival and departure they make delicious little polite speeches to each other—much more picturesque than our mean-

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and went all over the mountains. He seemed a good type of youth, sturdy, cheerful and independent.

The Yai Dōbe plain, on which we now debouched, is a small but perfect example of the inland drainage basins characteristic of Central Asia. Situated at an average elevation of 5,000 feet, it is some 60 miles long by 15-20 broad and is enclosed on the north by one of the parallel ranges of the Tien Shan with peaks up to 13,000 feet, on the south and east by foothills rising to 8,000 feet. It has no outlet, but boasts its own miniature Lop Nor in the shape of a salt lake near its south-eastern corner. Like the *hāmūns* of Persian Baluchistan and Sistan, this lake varies in size according to the rainfall in the mountains, from practically nothing to a sheet of water 40 or 50 square miles in area. The rest of the Yai Dōbe plian is partly barren, partly covered with tamarisks and a sparse forest of desert poplar. Some of these trees attain a great age and size; they are not in the least like poplars, resembling rather the British oak. Here and there in the forest are springs of fresh or slightly brackish water, each with farmsteads or Kirghiz tents in the vicinity. In the spring and autumn the woodland is delightful, but in summer the mosquitos and gadflies for which both it and the Maralbashi jungles to the south are notorious make it uninhabitable by man or beast.

For fifty miles we marched across this curious plain. On September 5 we passed out of the desert-poplar forest and camped the same evening at the springs of Yairam Bulak. Here two families of Kirghiz had pitched their *aq-ois* near a couple of tiny crofts shaded by willows, landmarks for miles in the great sweep of bare plain. We liked the Kirghiz of these hills and got on well with them, but we could not help noticing that they were less hospitable than their cousins of our beloved "Alps of Qungur." They never asked us into their *aq-ois*, nor did they seem to regard us guests as the others (often quite embarassingly) did. It struck me that there might be two reasons for this. In the first place, living on the Russian border, they are at once less secure and more sophisticated. In the second, a trade route much used by Turki merchants passes through their territory; these men, I was told, were in the habit of taking supplies whenever they could and not paying for them. But the Tien Shan Kirghiz could be friendly enough when once their confidence had been gained. The ladies of Yairam Bulak crowded round D., whose

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563 576 mutual courtesy. In addressing one another they use the polite form of you. The same politeness is demonstrated between wife and husband. Parents use the equivalent of "thou" to address their children, servants or workers. Upon meeting a friend or entering a friend's house they say "As-salam Alaikum," and the reply is "Alaikum as-salam." They inquire about the health of the family, then bow and shake hands. Only women kiss when they meet, and only if they are related. When they part they say "Khosh," or "Allah Akbar," meaning, "The Lord is great."

563 576 574 264 [782] The more religious women pray before eating or starting to do something. Washing the hands before and after meals is mandatory. Bowls of water and towels are provided at a feast or banquet table, and hands are washed between courses. When a hostess serves refreshments to a guest, the guest rises, bows and says "Ishqallah," meaning thank you. Polite speeches are made by both host and guest on the guest's arrival and departure. Good manners are regarded as important.

4. Superstitions and taboos

563 771 [776] [778] [769] The New Uighurs attach superstition to almost everything. They believe in witches, ghosts, charms and talismans. As mentioned before, they believe in the powers of local saints and heroes, to whom they have dedicated innumerable shrines, and certain superstitions connect these shrines with the curing of disease and the bearing of children. Ancestor worship is also strong among them, as shown by the popular names of the shrines.

[756] [755] [789] 563 771 775 [782] [825] The people are also firm believers in witch-doctors, and in magic powers that cure disease, induce love, or sow enmity between people. Ghosts are much feared, especially the ghost of a Chinese. People regard the Urumchi Road from Kashgar as a haunt for Chinese ghosts. They believe that if one is haunted he may be able to propitiate the ghosts by leaving money on his doorstep overnight. If the money is gone in the morning, the ghosts have taken it and will make no further trouble. They also have a superstitious dread of snakes, and believe that if one kills a snake, its mate will haunt him.

563 372 [777] 563 821 The New Uighurs try to maintain an everlasting fire in their fireplaces, to bring prosperity to the house. Ashes from the fireplace are carried out at night or before sunrise, for to clean the fireplace and take out the ashes during the day may bring misfortune to the household. They fear thunder, and during a thunderstorm they pray for deliverance from threatening danger.

5. Religious celebrations and festivals.

563 796 Like the festivals of Moslems the world over, the festivals of the New Uighurs are deeply colored with religious influence. Besides Fridays, which are generally celebrated, the people have only three main holidays, Rōse-häyt, Kurban-häyt and

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563 Yengi-Yil (New Year).
796 Rōse-hăyt, a solemn holiday, is celebrated in the ninth month according to the Moslem calendar, and lasts three days. The
[785] holidays follow the thirty days of Rōse fast, which resembles the Ramadan fast discussed previously. During the three days, everyone stops work and visits friends and relatives. In each
[574] household, guests are served meats, boiled eggs, fruits, all
[762] kinds of cakes and sweets, and tea.

Kurban-hăyt is also a three-day holiday. On the first day, the orthodox go to the mosques at sunrise and pray for two
[184] hours. After they return to their homes, every adult male in a
[782] rich family kills a sheep. Among the poor, only the head of the
[775] house kills a sheep. These sheep are sacrificed to Allah, who, they believe, will make their journey to the Garden of Eden easier after they die. Then there is celebration and feasting. Musicians play all day long in the streets and bazaars, while both men and women dance.

Yengi-Yil, the New Year, begins with the first lunar month, and is also celebrated for three days. No services are performed in the mosques at this time. Musicians play, and there are singing, dancing and feasting throughout the community. It is the custom for women to sing on swings constructed for the occasion in the bazaar.

563 Nazara is a celebration observed by the wealthy in connection
796 with weddings, birth and circumcision. The host holds open
184 house for his friends, and gives bread and meat to the poor. As the rich are enjoying the host's hospitality, the poor are clus-
[735] tering at his gate awaiting the distribution of food. Each receives a large loaf of bread and a slice of meat, and is expected to call down the blessings of Allah upon the benefactor. The hospitality and charity extended by the host are considered to enhance his merit.

6. Leisure, music and dancing

563 When the crops are gathered and the field work is completed,
519 both men and women like to visit the bazaars in the neighboring
533 towns. They go for the entertainment, and for the news and gos-
535 sip circulating in the bazaar. The well-to-do give evening parties for their friends and relatives, and always there is an orchestra at the party, to play for singing and dancing. According to custom, only two persons dance at a time. They dance slowly and smoothly, with no quick or lively movements. Their dancing is very graceful, but monotonous. Party refreshments are cold meats, pastries, fruits and tea.

563 Although most of the New Uighurs lead a hard and humdrum
519 type of life, they become gay and animated when they sing and listen to music. They exploit every possible occasion to have a good time—weddings, birthdays, circumcisions, even ablution

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faces were not veiled, and they seemed to have considerable freedom. The flowing, white drapery adds greatly to the beauty of these tall, dark, handsome creatures, and affords full play for coquettish movements and tantalising concealment when once curiosity has been aroused. In the younger women a thick line of black joined the eyebrows over the bridge of the nose, and the face was framed by two long, shining plaits hanging over the breast. The feet were bare, and when indoors were thrust into a heel-less slipper, but when walking out of doors top-boots were usually worn, and sometimes blue velvet socks embroidered with sequins. The whole dress is finished off with a round, brimless cap, which worn over the veil keeps it in place. Hami has its own peculiar style, shape and decoration of the cap, and the initiated can distinguish it in a moment from the designs used in other cities.

Ever since the name of Hami has been known to the European nations, it has carried with it the report of the extraordinary hospitality of its people, and at the present day travellers may still count upon a friendly reception by its inhabitants. This is doubtless due in part to its peculiar geographical position, which might be compared with that of a lonely island in a wide sea, only that here the oasis is an island of green in the ocean of sand. The produce of this terraced and well-watered region is more than sufficient to supply its own population, and its parks, its streams and flowers, as well as the abundance of its vegetables and fruits, amply justified the name of the 'earthly paradise,' by which it had been described to us in Suchow.

The streets and bazaars fascinated us. Here were gathered men from all parts of Asia, mixing freely in the crowded thoroughfares, yet curiously segregated as to their respective trades and lines of commerce.

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Where a stream is not accessible, the water is poured from the purification pot. Many were the prostrations and different attitudes taken by the worshipper as he lifted his hands to the back of his ears, then bowed, rose, and bowed again towards Mecca. In the evening the children were all gathered together for the reading of the Koran and the study of Arabic, and, incidentally, to learn how superior were the followers of the Prophet to the rest of mankind.

Our first caller was a Military Official who had become a Christian during his stay at Urumchi. His visit was followed by the arrival of servants carrying trays of the best food the restaurants of Kucheng could produce. Piled up on brazen plates was the Turki national dish of 'pillau.' It was composed of rice steamed and fried, and flavoured with chopped mutton, carrots and onions, sultanas and spices, and laid on the top were joints of roast fowl. This was accompanied by large, thin, flat cakes of bread and plates of fruit, while more servants followed with fodder and grain for our mules. Later on this gentleman's mother called and asked us to her house, where she most kindly entertained us. The food supply of Kucheng was so good that during the length of our stay we were able to luxuriate in milk, fruit, fresh bread, and good mutton.

Our next visitors were the band of Shansi men with whom we had become so friendly *en route*. It was difficult to recognise in the well-dressed gentleman who sent in his card the pedestrian traveller who had carried his own bundle and water can. They were most eager to know if Kucheng reached the expectations formed from their descriptions of its glories. Here, as elsewhere, we found no difficulty of access to the homes of both Chinese and Turki, and we never went out without receiving cordial invitations to visit well-off families in their comfortable houses.

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be a Qazaq. She wore a printed cotton gown to her ankles, and over it a striped coat, cut with an old-fashioned waistline, and down the back seam the stripes met in fishbone pattern, while her head and face were swathed in the nunlike headgear worn by all Qazaq women. A call from our driver brought an acquiescing response from her, and he drew up as she now moved toward the great mound of drying cow-dung, which is the inevitable adjunct to the Qazaq home. Her fireplace was of the simplest, a deep hole hollowed in the ground, and three iron rods and a hook, from which a kettle hung. She dexterously placed the cakes of cow dung on the embers, and blowing on them, in a short time there was a glowing fire and a singing kettle. One of her children was seen carrying water from the spring, while the other was collecting fuel, but both now came running to see us. Accepting her invitation we entered the tent, and here found her husband, a Honan man, lying down with the hateful opium pipe by his side. Nevertheless, with the manners of a gentleman, he at once rose, spread a carpet for us, and with a gesture placed his pipe at our disposal, but adding as he did so: 'You have none of these bad habits in your country.' We sat and talked with this intelligent man, who for some unknown reason had left China, wandered across the desert, and thrown in his lot with the Qazaq people, taking one of their women to be his wife and the mother of his children. Another of these enigmatic people gathered in this strangest of countries, where a man's past is known only to himself, to be buried and forgotten.

While we were talking Sandy Macnab was working. Producing a length of cotton material, of suitable size and shape to fit between the shafts of his cart, he proceeded to fasten it so as to form a feeding trough, in